

ENVISIONING NORTHGATE'S 5th AVENUE NE

A vision for 5th Avenue NE



Overview

Today’s automobile oriented Northgate commercial area is envisioned to become one of Seattle’s five mixed-use urban centers. 5th Avenue NE is a centrally located arterial running through Northgate’s commercial core and serves as an important vehicular and transit corridor. Proposed private redevelopment and public investment create opportunities for this street to serve as a primary pedestrian connection to housing, retail and community facilities within the area.

Background

The 5th Avenue NE Streetscape Design Project presents a streetscape design for 5th Avenue NE from NE 100th to NE 112th. It reflects the community’s vision for transforming this street into a key pedestrian corridor for the Northgate Urban Center. Making 5th Avenue NE into a pedestrian-friendly street has been a high priority for the Northgate community, first in the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan and then during the Northgate Community Workshops held in 2000. Initial street design concepts were developed over a period of six months, during which, the Planning Commission sponsored a community workshop to ensure community input.

The Vision for 5th Avenue NE

As pedestrians walk along 5th Avenue NE, their experience will be both stimulating and comfortable. Sidewalks and crossings will allow for generous walking movement and an increase in width at key corners. Inviting spaces will encourage sociability along retail frontage. Street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting will line the sidewalk, providing visual continuity while defining the public realm. Landscaped medians at appropriate locations will further define the character of the street, creating a ‘boulevard’ effect. As a key pedestrian street within a larger urban area, 5th Avenue NE will have connections with surrounding streets and properties for an improved overall pedestrian network.

Streetscape Design Plan

This streetscape design plan focuses on improvements within the street right-of-way, design guidelines for private development, and unique design opportunities on properties adjacent to the right-of way. It is intended to serve as a guide and a catalyst for physical improvements to the public realm and as part of subsequent private development on 5th Avenue NE. The goal is to change 5th Avenue NE from an arterial with a vehicular emphasis to an engaging pedestrian-friendly corridor. This vision is articulated through specific street design elements, design guidelines and an implementation strategy.

Implementation

Components of the streetscape design plan are expected to be implemented in phases, culminating in a 20-year transformation from a suburban pattern of auto-oriented office and retail development into a street where people walk between shops, restaurants, offices and residences. An implementation strategy lays out near-term and long-term actions needed to realize the plan. The plan’s success will require a shared commitment between the City and the community, as well as an on-going stewardship effort.

Key Elements of the Streetscape Design Report

The Streetscape Design Report groups specific elements around design themes:

- improving pedestrian mobility (“Pedestrians in Motion”), and
- improving the definition of the pedestrian environment (“Defining the Pedestrian Realm”).

Widened sidewalks, clearly defined street crossings and increased crossing opportunities help to create a network for pedestrian movement between the community and key destinations points, such as a library, a neighbor’s house or a

café. The pedestrian realm is better defined with elements that introduce unifying patterns to the street (like trees and medians), increased buffering of the pedestrian from traffic, and identification of unique opportunities to create a sense of place.

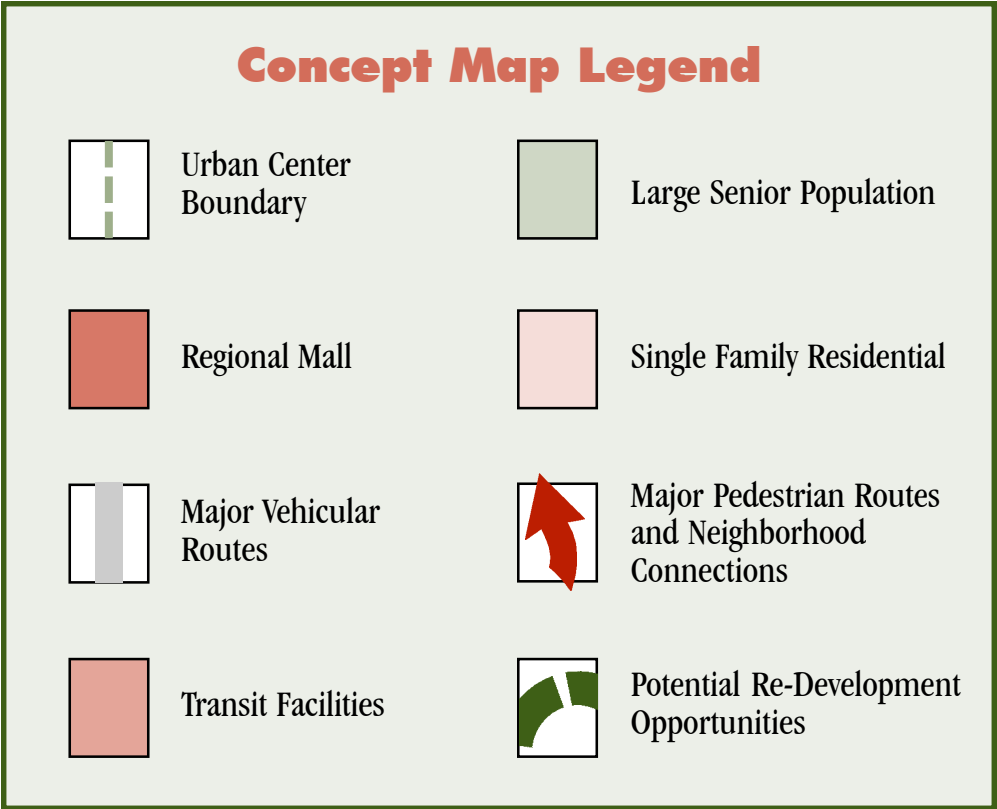
The design report also identifies areas where street operation changes have been identified as needed to improve traffic flow and operations. These potential changes must be carefully considered to ensure that they do not further compromise the pedestrian environment. Specific pedestrian considerations are recommended to mitigate the impacts these changes may have on goal of achieving a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Beyond the specific design elements, the Streetscape Design Report identifies some broader planning strategies to further improve pedestrian opportunities in the larger Northgate area. These include more comprehensive approaches to addressing the balance of mobility needs in an area still dominated by vehicular travel.

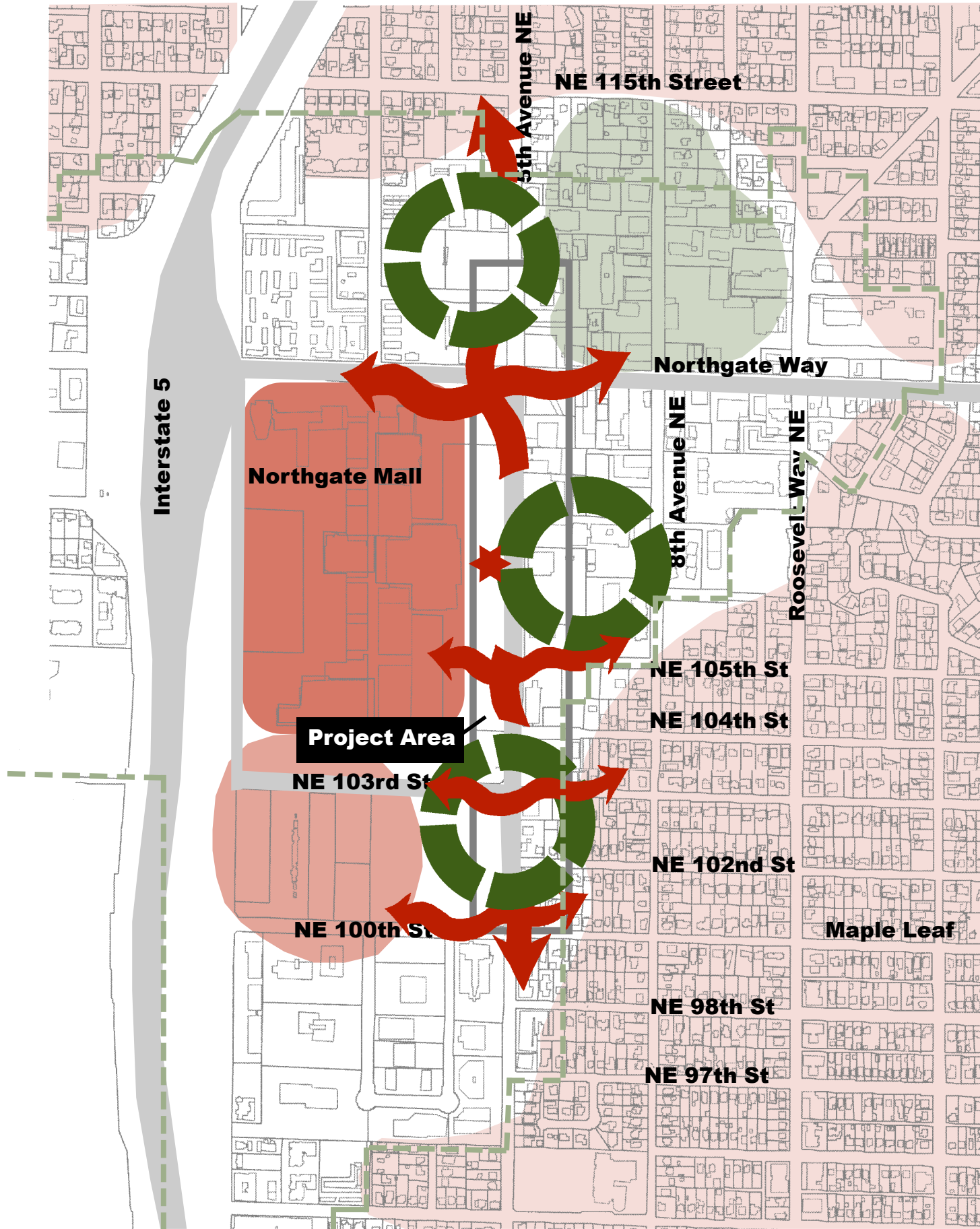
See other side for a highlighted streetscape design plan and description of basic design elements.

Concept Map

- Clearly delineate pedestrian areas from those of the vehicle along the street edge.
- Create a network for pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and key destination points.
- Create a pedestrian promenade linking the mall entrance with the potential Library and Community Center sites (see ★ on map).
- Improve the streetscape environment and enhance key pedestrian areas.

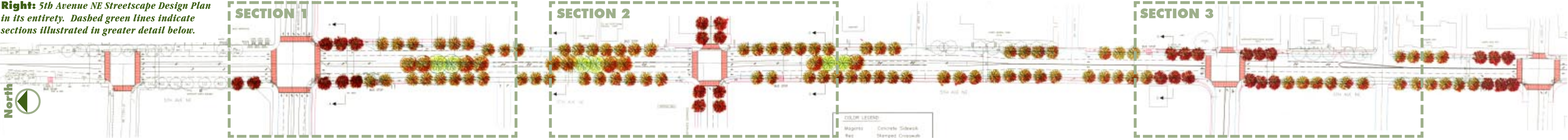


CONCEPT MAP



5th AVENUE STREETSCAPE DESIGN PLAN

Right: 5th Avenue NE Streetscape Design Plan in its entirety. Dashed green lines indicate sections illustrated in greater detail below.



SECTION 1

Crossing Northgate Way

Explore various technologies to increase pedestrian comfort and safety.

Wider Sidewalks to provide adequate person space and movement

Expand existing sidewalks to six-foot sidewalks with six-foot planting strips or 10-foot sidewalks, depending on the existing right of way (R.O.W.) width, along the entire project length. Currently most sidewalks are six feet against the curb. For those areas with limited R.O.W., the additional footage allowing a twelve foot sidewalk would occur when adjacent properties redevelop along areas designated as major pedestrian streets (NE 105th to NE Northgate Way).

Lengthen Right Turn lane Northbound along 5th Avenue NE at Intersection with Northgate Way. Add Double Left Turn Lane Westbound and Eastbound from Northgate Way onto 5th Avenue NE.

While Seattle Transportation anticipates the need to lengthen the right turn lane, the requirement for this lengthening should be re-evaluated based on updated information from future private development proposals. The proposed double turn lanes on NE Northgate Way conflict with pedestrian goals and should be designed so they improve safe pedestrian movement.

Edge Treatment

Encourage property owners to install design and landscape features where the sidewalk meets private property. This could include large-scale design elements such as trellises, growing surfaces and creative street lighting along the length of 5th Avenue NE, especially along the west side.

Street operation changes are shown in boxes.

SECTION 2

Improve Pedestrian Access Across 5th Avenue NE

Evaluate ways to encourage safe and visible pedestrian crossing opportunities at non-signalized intersections. 5th Avenue NE has eight intersections from 100th to 113th where pedestrians have legal opportunities to cross.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking provides an additional buffer between the pedestrian and the street when one lane is not needed to address peak traffic flow. In the near-term, conduct data collection and assess impacts to transit service that could occur from implementing on-street parking on east and west sides of the street in designated R-O-W areas between NE 100th and NE 105th during off-peak hours. Implement a pilot project if it is determined to be feasible and not detrimental to transit service based on the data collection and impact assessment. With additional study, any on-street parking that is allowed could be expanded, reduced, or eliminated as land uses change along the street frontage and traffic (including transit) patterns change.

Relocated Bus Stops and Enhanced Bus Shelters

Relocate two bus stops to the far side of intersections at NE 106th, to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety. All bus stop shelters should be enhanced with larger shelter canopies, benches, garbage/recycling cans and route information.

Create a Pedestrian Promenade across 5th Avenue NE at the mall entrance and onto properties to the east

Create a dynamic pedestrian presence by designing a signature corridor across the intersection at 5th Avenue NE and NE 106th. This would connect the mall entrance and potential future Library/Community Center entrance with a wide pedestrian promenade and signature street trees onto connecting properties.

Landscaped Median

Install landscaped medians to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and to create a sense of place.

SECTION 3

Connectivity

An important ingredient in 5th Avenue NE's success as a pedestrian-friendly street is the ability for people to walk there from the surrounding neighborhoods. The City should investigate ways of improving east-west connections.

Textured Crosswalks at Signalized Intersections

Install improved crosswalks consisting of stamped concrete with textured pattern at all signalized intersections to increase the visibility and safety of pedestrians crossing the street.

Street Trees

Plant street trees in planting strips or in tree pits within expanded concrete sidewalks to help buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic. In the near-term, plant street trees along the western edge of 5th Avenue NE and in the proposed medians.

Gateway Treatment

Create a "gateway" such as street trees, artwork, and other design elements at 100th and 103rd to ensure that people in vehicles, on bikes or on foot experience a sense of arrival.

Park 6 Improvements

Integrate an overlook or plaza at Thornton Creek park into the streetscape.

Intersection Changes at NE 103rd and NE 100th

Channel northbound roadway lanes, allowing a left hand turn pocket at NE 103rd, while allowing through traffic an unobstructed northbound lane. Metro plans to expand the curb radii at NE 100th to accommodate bus turning movements. When resolving bus turning needs, include design elements that improve safe pedestrian movement.

Street Amenities

Incorporate pedestrian-scaled lighting, architectural details to enclose and define the street edge. Seating opportunities, and other amenities such as community kiosks and landscaping will help knit together a comprehensive pedestrian-friendly street environment.